

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

"The consent of the governed." These five words recognize that our Nation's sovereignty is in her people—not the government, not the legislative branch, not the judicial branch, not the executive branch or the Federal bureaucracy, but in the people.

Sovereignty in the people was, indeed, revolutionary in 1776, and it is at the heart of the notion of self-government. This sovereignty in the people, however, is not absolute. It is restrained by a higher law that acknowledges that certain of our rights come from our Creator and are inalienable, among them, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

These rights do not come from or depend on government, or what a majority of people electing the government decide. They require, however, that the government protect them. Sovereignty is further restrained by the higher law that we are created equal.

Our laws should not favor one person over another. All are to be equal before the law, and there must be a fair playing field where all are given the opportunity to develop their God-given gifts and talents.

These concepts, Mr. Speaker, are not just founding principles. These are truths, self-evident truths. There are many today who challenge the notion of truth and claim everything is relative. But the Founders recognized the self-evident truths of the Declaration in establishing this country.

Our Founders built on these principles when they adopted our Constitution and Bill of Rights which limited the power of the Federal Government. The Founders understood that the bigger government became, the more it would infringe on the principles in our Declaration.

It was appealing to our founding principles that our Nation was able to correct the defect in our Constitution that denied equal rights and liberty to those held in slavery.

But some current political views reject the framework of sovereignty in the people, and that such sovereignty is limited by God-given rights and freedoms. Some decry our Constitution's structure as being a charter of negative liberties.

For example, Barack Obama, prior to becoming President said that our Constitution, "... says what the States can't do to you. Says what the Federal Government can't do to you, but doesn't say what the Federal Government or State government must do on your behalf."

If you don't like what the Constitution says, there is a process to amend

it. And those who would advocate for the government to do things, should go through the process of proposing amendments.

Those who are Progressives believe that they can better order a society than can a free people relying on their God-given rights to life and liberty. But this is inconsistent with the notion of self-government.

Progressives believe in the power of government. The power of government should be used to protect rights, not infringe or abridge them. What Progressives miss is how the power of government can destroy communities and lives and infringe upon God-given freedoms, which we have seen in recent decades.

It is the power of the government acting through the Supreme Court that denied the very first right recognized in our Declaration, the right to life, for an entire class of human beings.

To be clear, insisting on universality of the God-given right to life is not an establishment of religion. It is simply an affirmation of a self-evident truth described in our Declaration of Independence.

It is the power of government that put through great society programs that undermine the family and dramatically increased societal challenges as a result.

It is the power of government that targeted the American energy industry, threatening hundreds of jobs in my district.

It is the power of government that took away healthcare plans that people liked, and the power of government that went after the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Rather than looking to the power of government, perhaps we should look to the power of the people. Rightly understood, government should not be looked at as a vehicle for wielding power, but for serving and protecting the rights in our Declaration and Constitution. It is never out of season to rediscover those principles.

This is what Abraham Lincoln called upon us to do at another divided time in our Nation. In an 1858 speech in Lewistown, Illinois, Lincoln said, "... if you have been taught doctrines conflicting with the great landmarks of the Declaration of Independence; if you have listened to suggestions which would take away from its grandeur, and mutilate the fair symmetry of its proportions; if you have been inclined to believe that all men are not created equal in those inalienable rights enumerated by our chart of liberty, let me entreat you to come back ... come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence."

If we want union, let us unite around the principles of the Declaration. If we want justice, let us work for equality for all while protecting the right to life of every human being, no matter their age or state of dependency.

If we want tolerance, let us appreciate that while we, indeed, have dif-

ferences, we should not demonize those with whom we disagree.

If the Little Sisters of the Poor, or a small business, or a private citizen for that matter, hold sincerely held beliefs that people throughout history would recognize as being grounded in the exercise of conscience and faith, we should be tolerant of such exercise.

If we want liberty, let us ensure that our Constitution remains a check on the power of the State that would infringe on the fundamental rights and freedoms our Founders sought to protect.

And if we want peace, let us embrace what our Founders embraced. And like the Founders, let us firmly rely on the protection of divine providence as we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

And when we reaffirm our foundational principles, let us hope that instead of division, we would see the new birth of freedom that Lincoln envisioned.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my deepest gratitude to the people of Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District, encompassing Beaver County and parts of Allegheny, Lawrence, Westmoreland, Cambria and Somerset Counties. I appreciate that they elected me to represent them in this House for the past 6 years.

It has been an incredible honor to pursue the objectives they sent me here to do: to get the economy growing at a healthier pace with more jobs and higher wages; to stop government overreach that was taking away the right of people to choose their own healthcare plan and causing their health insurance costs to skyrocket; to stand in solidarity with our veterans; and defend the foundational principles on which this country was founded, including the first right and the first freedom mentioned in our founding documents, the God-given right to life and the free exercise of religion.

Mr. Speaker, I could not have done my work without the support of several constituents, in particular: my wife, Elsie; and my kids, Mimi, Gerard, Edmund, Maggie, Helen, and Alice.

□ 1115

Their patience and endurance with my absences are what many families of those in public life go through, and I cannot thank them enough.

May God grant that our country reaffirm the truths embedded within our Declaration of Independence. May He grant that such reaffirmation does lead to that new birth of freedom that President Lincoln spoke of.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### WE NEED TO MODERNIZE OUR INDUSTRIAL POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Ohio

(Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the Congressman from the General Motors Lordstown plant. We had some bad news this week that we are going to lose 1,600 jobs in Lordstown. When you factor in the supply chain, four, five, six times the amount of that in our community—seat manufacturer, logistics company, trucking, and all the rest. Many communities in the last week have been dealt a pretty bad hand. I think this speaks, Mr. Speaker, to the broken economic system that we have in the United States.

This company, many years ago, got a rescue package from the taxpayers in the United States. When many years later, last year, they got \$157 million in a tax cut that we were told was going to be spent for workers, factories, and jobs in the heartland, and turned around and cut 14,000 jobs and their stock price goes up 6 percent, that is a broken economic system that we have in the United States of America.

We need an industrial policy in this country where the government, the agencies, the departments, the Tax Code, and the investments in infrastructure and education are all moving in the same direction that will create manufacturing jobs here in the United States. We have to have policies that move venture capital out of the three main States, California, New York, and Massachusetts, which is 80 percent of all venture capital.

I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, that the people on Wall Street or the people in the high-tech centers of our country fully appreciate what is happening in communities all over the United States of America. They are being hollowed out and disinvested in.

We need this government to begin to modernize itself and to look at the world as it is, and to recognize that globalization may yield great benefits and great wealth but that those benefits aren't shared everywhere in the United States of America.

They are not shared in the industrial Midwest. Wages have been stagnant for 30 years. People work hard, play by the rules, and still get to their retirement, and they lose their pension or their pension is cut in half.

This is not working. This is not working, Mr. Speaker, and the American people are fed up.

How much can the worker take? How much can their families take?

Year in and year out for 40 years, this has been going on in this country. People who have money continue to make money. The top 1 percent continues to do well. I don't hate anybody because they are rich. But my goodness gracious, when everyone else is suffering, when communities in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, western Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Minnesota that have done so much for so long, whether there is a war or manufacturing, it has been these communities who have re-

sponded. Now they have been cut loose, and the stock price goes up.

It is time for us to reclaim the American Dream for these communities and these workers who have done nothing wrong. They have done everything right. They support their church; they support the Little League; they sit on the boards of the booster clubs; and they coach football. They have done everything right. Everything our society would ask of them, they have done, and they get cut loose. Now we live in communities that have blight; they don't have broadband; and they don't have investment.

Some people will say: Just cut taxes for the wealthiest people, and all that wealth will trickle right down to the Lordstowns, the Youngstowns, and the Gary, Indianas of the world.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? We have been trying this for 40 years. Since 1980, the supply-side economic policy has been pushed in this country. If it is so damn good, then why isn't it working for working class people? That is what I want to know.

If this economic philosophy is so great, why does the worker in Lordstown get screwed and the stock price for the company goes up 6 percent?

Why do the CEOs of these companies get 350 times the amount of money that the worker on the factory floor gets? Does that seem fair to anybody?

These people work hard and play by the rules. They can't get healthcare. People out working hard, pension gets squeezed, kid gets sick, can't afford it, got to go to the emergency room, opiate epidemic. Try to work hard and go to college, end up \$30,000 in debt, \$40,000 in debt, have to move out of your own community.

The systems are broken in the United States, Mr. Speaker, and it is our job here in Washington, D.C., to remember these families who have done everything right.

That is our commitment. Our responsibility is to fix this broken system. There have been a lot of promises made over the last few years for these communities. Things are moving in the wrong direction, and it is our obligation to fix it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I was hoping we would be able to get more accomplished this week that would help the American workers. It is amazing a party that calls itself the friend of the working class in America has spent much of the last 10, 12 years doing everything they can to encourage people to come into the United

States illegally so that they can take the jobs from those hardworking Americans and those who wanted to work. It has clearly driven down wages for many years now.

I think that had a lot to do with President Trump's getting a higher percentage of African Americans and Hispanics than was ever predicted or that other Republicans have done. I have African American friends in different places who say that it is pretty clear the party that counts on getting 90 percent of our vote or so, most places, they haven't done us any good.

Under 8 years of the Obama administration, especially after the early part of the administration when the Democrats had the House, the Senate, and the White House, they got anything they wanted done.

Did they want to fix immigration or the border? No. It was not a priority at all.

They are more interested in driving us into socialized medicine, which has made record profits for the big pharmaceuticals, made record profits for the big insurance companies, and driven the little guys out of the market.

So we also know, and we have seen in this last election, the part that the multimillionaires, the megamillionaires, and the billionaires have played as they poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the election to try to drive into office people who call themselves Socialists, Communists, and progressives.

It doesn't take a lot of research to figure out why they would do that. We saw the policies of the Obama administration and the Democratic Party have a profound effect on the economy. President Obama himself—you can find it on video—he finally had to admit that, for the first time in American history—it was on his watch; it was under his policies—95 percent of all the income made in America went to the top 1 percent.

So we can talk about the party that cares deeply about the working class, but let's look at whom they pandered to in order to get hundreds of millions of dollars to help in races where we had Republican Members of Congress who were outspent 10-to-1, 20-to-1, and 30-to-1. It was dramatic.

Talking to TED CRUZ, he said that they had 18 full-time employees, which is understandable you would have a lot, because it is the big State of Texas. You need more than two or three. He had 18 full-time employees at the time of the election. He said that then he learned that his opponent, Robert Francis O'Rourke, had over 800 full-time employees.

What you normally use full-time employees in your campaign for, you don't have them necessarily go out and do the door knocking and do the calls, but usually it is your full-time employees who contact others and solicit volunteers who then go do the block walking, the phone calls, and all that kind of thing.